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Tour Notes

Serbia Montenegro Croatia & Bosnia - Balkan Explorer Tour Duration – 15 Days



Tour Rating

Fitness ●●○○○ | Off the Beaten Track ●●●○○ | Culture ●●●●○ | History ●●●●○ | Wildlife ●●●○○

Tour Pace

Moderate

Tour Highlights

- ✓ Durmitor National Park
- ✓ Ostrog Monastery
- ✓ Dubrovnik
- ✓ the Latin Bridge, site of the start of World War I





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Balkan Explorer

Visiting Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, this tour is a medley of former Yugoslav republics. Highlights include dynamic, modern European cities and coastal resorts, centres of conservative Orthodox Christian heritage, Sufi Islamic monasteries, pre-historic cultural centres, the point of origin for WW1, and a capital city that still bears the scars of Europe's most recent war. Over two weeks the Balkans may or may not become easier to understand. However, cultural and ethnic differences which have over the centuries in turn forged alliances and catalysed conflict will become apparent. This is a holiday, with fine wines and excellent cuisine, but it's also an exploration of human nature.

Tour Itinerary Notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested and on occasions alternative accommodation, of a similar standard to that named below, will be used.

Tour Guide

Our guides are a key strength, chosen for their knowledge of and passion for the areas in which they work. All of our guides are carefully hand-picked, and are not just passing through these countries, but are usually locally born. Unlike some companies it should be noted we do not send a guide or tour leader from Undiscovered Destinations in the UK as we have every confidence in our locally appointed representative who is responsible for operating the tour on our behalf. Where possible you will have the same guide throughout your trip but on occasions it may be necessary to change the guide at one or more points during the tour.

Itinerary

Day 1 – Belgrade, Serbia

On arrival in Belgrade transfer to hotel accommodation. The rest of the day is free to relax or explore independently. Overnight Hotel Rex or similar.

Day 2 –Belgrade

Today we explore Belgrade, visiting the temple of Saint Sava, the parliament buildings, Republic Square, and the Kalemegdan Fortress. Later, we take a cruise on the River Danube to see more of the city's sights, before some free time to relax, perhaps ordering a coffee and watching Belgrade's citizens about their business. Overnight Hotel Rex or similar. (B)

Please note: *The Danube cruise is weather dependent.*

Day 3 - Fruška Gora, Sremski Karlovci and Novi Sad

There's an early start this morning as we set off to explore Fruška Gora National Park, also referred to as 'The Holy Mountain' due to the 16 Orthodox late 15th and 16th century monasteries within the park boundaries. Afterwards we continue to Sremski Karlovci, a centre for Serbian culture in the 18th and 19th centuries where a city tour includes visiting cellars and tasting local wines. Later we drive to Petrovaradin Fortress, known as 'The Gibraltar of the Danube' before exploring the historical attractions of Novi Sad, including its iconic clock tower. Overnight Hotel Rex or similar hotel. (B)

Day 4 – Danube Valley

This morning we leave Belgrade behind and travel along the winding Danube valley. Near the border with Romania we visit the medieval fortress of Golubac, situated at the very entrance of Djerdap Gorge, known also as the Iron Gates, where the Danube at its widest. Afterwards we continue to the archaeological site of



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Lepenski Vir, located in the gorge itself. The site was once the centre for an important prehistoric culture, and remains of religious architecture have been found that date from 6500 to 5500 BC. Overnight Hotel Djerdap or similar. (B)

Day 5 – Rajac Wine Cellars, Felix Romuliana and Vrnjcka Banja

Today we travel to Rajac Wineries' cellars near the village of the same name. The unique complex built around the mid-18th century comprises 270 stone cellars, a central square and fountain dedicated to Saint Tryphon, patron saint of winemakers. Afterwards we visit The National Museum in Zaječar before continuing to the ancient Roman site of Felix Romuliana. This is one of the most important late Roman sites in Europe. Later, we head to Vrnjcka Banja and our hotel for the evening. Overnight at Vrnjcka Banja Hotel or similar. (B)

Day 6 – Studenica and Sopocani-Kolasin Monasteries

After breakfast we leave Vrnjcka Banja and head to the Studenica and Sopocani Monasteries. Constructed in the 12th century, Studenica is the largest and wealthiest of Serbia's Orthodox monasteries, with a fine collection of Byzantine paintings. Built in the 13th century, Sopocani is part of a cluster of medieval fortifications and churches that form Stari Ras, Serbia's first capital. The monastery contains masterpieces of European fresco painting. Both monasteries are UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Afterwards we cross the border into Montenegro and stay in the town of Kolašin. Overnight at the Hotel Cile or similar. (B)

Day 7 – Biogradska Gora and Durmitor National Park

This morning we drive to Biogradska Gora, an isolated area of forests and mountains surrounding nine glacial lakes, one of Europe's last three remaining primeval forests. Later, we continue to Durdevica Tara Bridge, which at 172 metres above the Tara River, was once the largest vehicular concrete arch bridge in Europe. After time for photographs we travel on to the breath taking mountains, forests, lakes and high pastures of Durmitor National Park. If we arrive in good time we'll walk around the park's Black Lake. Overnight Hotel Enigma or similar. (B)

Day 8 - Sedlo pass, Ostrog and Cetinje

Leaving the park this morning we cross the 1,907m Sedlo Pass on the road from Zabljak to Piva Lake, the highest road pass in Montenegro, where we'll stop and take in views over the Piva River Canyon. Afterwards we continue to Ostrog Monastery where chapels are set in a sheer rock face and linked by beautifully decorated caves, passages and stairways. Later we visit Podgorica where there'll be time to explore independently, before ending our day in Cetinje, an important historical centre dating from the 15th century and the cultural and spiritual heart of Montenegro. Overnight Hotel Sport Inn or similar. (B)

Day 9 – Cetinje to Lovcen and Kotor.

This morning we visit Cetinje and the former palace of King Nikola, now Montenegro's National Museum, before departing for Kotor. On the way we stop at Lovcen National Park to see the mausoleum of Peter II Petrovic-Njegos. Our journey today ends in Kotor where we'll take a walking tour to discover the Old City, the Cathedral of Saint Tryphon and the fortress of Saint Ivan. Overnight Hotel Marija 2 or similar. (B)

Day 10 – Kotor and Dubrovnik (Croatia) – Trebinje (Bosnia & Herzegovina)

After breakfast we take a cruise around the islands in Kotor Bay before crossing the border into Croatia and heading to the UNESCO World Heritage City of Dubrovnik, one of the most attractive cities in the region. Here we take a walking tour with a local guide and visit the Dominican Monastery. Later we leave Dubrovnik and head to our evening stopover at Trebinje, just over the border in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Overnight at Platani Hotel or similar. (B)

Please note: *The Kotor Bay cruise is weather dependent.*



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Day 11 – Trebinje, Radimlja, Blagaj Tekija and Mostar.

This morning starts with a sightseeing tour of Trebinje before travelling to the necropolis of Radimlja near Stolac. This site has the best-known collection of mediaeval tomb stones in the country and is among the most valuable mediaeval monuments in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Afterwards our next stop is the village of Blagaj Tekija where a 600-year-old Dervish monastery is situated at the base of cliffs overlooking the source of the river Buna. This is a beautiful, tranquil place animated by the natural energy of the water. Later we arrive in Mostar where the Old City and bridge are UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Overnight Hotel Rivero or similar. (B)

Day 12 – Konjic and Sarajevo

We leave Mostar this morning and drive to the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo. On the way we'll stop at Konjic, set in a beautiful wooded area popular with walkers, and one of the oldest permanent settlements in Bosnia, dating back almost 4,000 years. Arriving in Sarajevo we take a tour through the old oriental parts of the city known for its architecture, sweet shops and cafes. Later we visit the Latin Bridge where the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria precipitated World War I. Nearby, various markings on the pavements are memorials to victims of snipers during siege of Sarajevo from 1992 to 1996. Afterwards we visit the Sarajevo Tunnel Museum, a section of the tunnel that provided access to the city during the siege. Later there's free time to explore Sarajevo independently at your own pace. Overnight Hotel Hecco or similar. (B)

Day 13 – Sarajevo

Today we visit the River Bosna and later have to free time to relax or explore the city independently. Overnight Hotel Hecco or similar. (B)

Day 14 – Visegrad and Belgrade

Leaving Sarajevo, we stop to visit the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Mehmed Paša Sokolović Bridge in Višegrad widely known from book, 'The Bridge on the Drina' by Yugoslav/Serbian Nobel Laureate, Ivo Andrić. The bridge was constructed in 1577 by the Ottoman court architect Mimar Sinan on the order of the Grand Vizier Mehmed Paša Sokolović. From Visegrad, we return to Belgrade via Tara Mountain and the Drina River valley. Overnight Hotel Rex or similar. (B)

Day 15 – Depart Belgrade

At a suitable time you will be collected from the hotel and transferred to the airport for your onward flight (B)

Inclusions / Exclusions

Inclusions:

Arrival and departure transfers
All accommodation on twin share basis
Services of English-speaking guide / tour leader
Meals as listed (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner)
Entrance fees for sites listed as part of the itinerary

Excluded:

International flights
Any airport taxes
Travel Insurance
Visas
Drinks



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Important Information

Foreign Office Travel Warnings

Before booking your tour please familiarise yourself with the country specific information provided by the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) - <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>. This includes important information such as latest immigration requirements, and details of any travel advisories.

We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). In particular we will always advise clients of any travel warnings. At present there are no warnings against travel to Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

It should be noted that this information applies to British citizens. Other nationals are asked to check the current position of their respective government.

Accommodation and Meals

Hotel Check-in Times

As a general rule most hotels will allow guests to check-in from 2pm. Please note that the price of your tour does not include guaranteed early check-in. Therefore please advise us if you would like to ensure that your room is available for an earlier arrival. This is particularly relevant on the first day of the tour and for early morning arrivals. One option is to pre-book and pay for an extra night at the beginning of your tour which will guarantee your accommodation is available irrespective of what time you arrive. Please contact us for information and costs.

It should also be noted that on many of our tours we have set-aside Day 1 of the itinerary as an 'arrival day'. For this reason and because tour participants are likely to be arriving at different times, and often from different countries, guided sightseeing or other activities are not included. If you are arriving early or before the start date of the tour and would like to organise some extra arrangements on a private basis please contact us.

Accommodation Rating

At Undiscovered Destinations we know our travellers prefer to stay in comfortable, mid-range accommodation which meets our own exacting standards. With a few exceptions you can expect rooms to be en-suite, with private bathroom and when necessary air-conditioning will be provided. In general you will find your hotel has a restaurant and/or bar.

We welcome solo travellers and single rooms will be allocated subject to the applicable tour supplement. Please note that on occasions you may not always be allocated a double or twin room, as some hotels have designated single rooms. These may be smaller in size. However, the supplement payable takes this into consideration.

Food & Drink

The daily meal basis is shown in the tour itinerary; breakfast (B), lunch (L) and dinner (D). Please note that lunch may be a picnic. Drinks are not included and will be payable locally in cash.

Dietary Requirements

If you have any special dietary requirements you must notify us at the time of booking. While we will make every effort to cater for you, we cannot guarantee that this will be possible.



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Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch £4 - £6

Dinner £8 - £10

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Water £0.80

Beer £2

Tipping – Guide and Drivers

Tipping is commonly recognised as a way of rewarding guides and drivers for good service. If you are happy with your guide and driver, please consider leaving a tip for them. For our European group tours, a reasonable amount would be between EUR3-5 per person per day for the guide, and EUR1-2 for the driver (you may have different guides in different countries). If you are travelling privately, then a reasonable amount would be around EUR7-10 per day for the guide and EUR3-5 per day for the driver. Waiters and bar staff in the region are generally low paid and it is common practice to leave a small tip – around 10% of the bill.

Foreign Exchange

ATM Availability: ATM machines are found in many towns

Credit and Debit Card Acceptance: Cards can only be used at the better hotels and restaurants

Local Currency: Euro, Croatian Kuna, Serbian Dinar, Bosnian Mark.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Euro

Where to Exchange: Your guide will advise you

Joining your Tour

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will receive an airport transfer, both on arrival and departure include in the tour price. In order that the transfer can be arranged please ensure that you advise us of your flight information once available. Please advise the date, time and flight number for your arrival/departure. If we have not been advised of this information at least 2 weeks before travel, then you will be required to make your own way to the hotel on Day 1 of your tour.



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Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Undiscovered Destinations that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country and be valid for the entire duration of your holiday.

Visa Information

Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

Regulations do frequently change though, so we advise that you check the current requirements with your nearest embassy or visa agency.

Passports

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, valid for at least six months after the date of return to the UK.

We strongly advise that your passport contains a minimum of two blank pages, as this may be a requirement of the local immigration authorities. In addition certain countries will stipulate that the two blank pages are opposite each other. If you are unable to meet these requirements you may be refused boarding by your airline or denied entry by the immigration authorities.

For specific information about the requirements for your destination please check with the country's embassy or consulate. Alternatively UK citizens can visit www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice.

Vaccinations & Protection

We strongly recommend that you contact your doctor's surgery or a specialist travel clinic for up-to-date information, advice and the necessary vaccinations. There are no compulsory vaccinations, but we recommend protection against Hepatitis A, Polio, Tetanus, and Typhoid. Tick-borne encephalitis is recommended by some medical sources if travelling in certain areas of Eastern Europe, at specific times of the year.

The legal status and regulation of some medicines prescribed or purchased in your home country can be different in other countries. If you're travelling with prescription or over-the-counter medicine, read this guidance from NaTHNaC on [best practice when travelling with medicines](#). For further information on the legal status of a specific medicine, you'll need to contact the embassy, high commission or consulate of the country or territory you're travelling to.

Preparing for your tour

Climate

The Balkan region experiences cold winters and hot summers. Spring and autumn offer the best chance of moderate temperatures. There is a chance of sporadic rain in spring and autumn, though generally this is in the form of short showers. Thunderstorms occur in summer generally helping to cool the air.



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Clothing

July and August are the hottest months, but early and late in the season go prepared with clothing to suit drops in temperature and the odd shower. Please note air conditioning may not available in some accommodations.

Equipment

The first thing on your list should be a first aid kit. Whilst there is no undue cause for alarm, travellers are best advised to travel well-prepared: adequately immunized, with sufficient supplies of prescription drugs, along with a medical kit. A torch, water bottle, insect repellent, hat, suncream (at least factor 15), good quality sunglasses and a lipsalve with sun protection. Also bring a swimsuit for swimming opportunities on the trip.

Footwear

Comfortable shoes/trainers plus sandals/flip flops for relaxing.

Luggage on tour

Your luggage should not exceed 20kgs (44lbs). One large rucksack, and one small hand luggage rucksack is acceptable.

Electric Supply & Plugs

Electrical supply is 220-230V and plugs usually have the European 2 Pin Round style.

Tour Itinerary Versions

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes. These tour notes updated 14 November 2019